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UNCLAS DUSHANBE 001742

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: MOJ COMES A BIT MORE CLEAN ON REGISTRATIONS

REF: DUSHANBE 1596

1. (U) The weekly Tajik-language newspaper, "Zindagi," published excerpts October 27 from a recent Ministry of Justice press conference in which a Tajik official noted that some foreign NGOs had activities "beyond the framework of their charters." Isroil Shoyev, Chief, Department of Legal Entity and Judicial Entity, offered that as a reason why the U.S. NGOs, Freedom House and National Democratic Institute (NDI), remained unregistered.

2. (U) In addition to NGO issues, the press conference addressed political party and other registration issues. Sumangul Taghoeva, Chief, Department on Registration of Public Associations, stated the Ministry had received registration papers of two new parties: the Party of Economic Reforms and Agrarian Party and anticipated registering the Progressive Youth Party (reftel). (NOTE: There was no mention of another party seeking registration for the second year, Vadhat or "Unity". END NOTE.) The ministry also announced it had registered and licensed the activities of eight unnamed publications, and two unnamed radio and TV stations.

3. (SBU) COMMENT: All conventional wisdom to the contrary, previous official explanations about Freedom House and NDI's registration woes have always focused on technical issues, not their activities in Tajikistan. That an MOJ official is now publicly questioning NDI and Freedom House's projects fits into the trend of increased government scrutiny of any pro-democracy-read "Western"-activities. As usual, the government is using legalism to justify political decisions. END COMMENT.

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